

Office of National Drug Control Policy

Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse

New Orleans, Louisiana

Profile of Drug Indicators

December 2002



ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse staff compiled this profile by using the most recent data available from open sources. The data presented are as accurate as the sources from which they were drawn. The information contained in this profile should not be used to rank or compare States or jurisdictions, due to differences in data collection and reporting methods.

New Orleans, Louisiana

The following profile contains information on demographics, political figures, programs, crime, drug use, drug trafficking, and enforcement statistics.

Demographics¹

- Population: 484,674 (2000 Census); 496,938 (1990 Census)
- Race/Ethnicity (2000 Census): 26.6% white; 66.7% African American/black; 0.2% American Indian/Alaska Native; 2.3% Asian; 0.2% other; 1.0% two or more races; 3.1% Hispanic/Latino origin (of any race)
- New Orleans is located in Orleans Parish

Politics

- Mayor: C. Ray Nagin²
- City Council Members (District): Eddie Sapir (President); Oliver Thomas, Jr. (Vice President); John Batt, Jr. (A); Renee Gill Pratt (B); Jacquelyn Brechtel Clarkson (C); Marlin N. Gusman (D); Cynthia Willard-Lewis (E)³
- New Orleans Superintendent of Police: Edwin P. Compass III⁴
- Orleans Parish Criminal Sheriff: Charles Foti, Jr.⁵

Programs/Initiatives

- High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)⁶
Designated in 1996, the Gulf Coast HIDTA is responsible for twelve counties and parishes in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi, including Orleans Parish. This HIDTA is responsible for coordinating law enforcement efforts to combat drug trafficking through the Gulf of Mexico and into the seaports and airports of the Gulf Coast area. The Gulf Coast HIDTA involves Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies including the New Orleans Police Department and Harbor Police.
- Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (CADA) for Greater New Orleans⁷
CADA is a non-profit community health agency that provides substance abuse prevention, education, and assessment services to individuals and families of the greater New Orleans area. CADA's services are offered in Orleans, Jefferson, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Tammany, and Plaquemines Parishes.

Federal Funding

- Drug-Free Communities Support Program⁸
No community coalitions in New Orleans have ever received funding through the Drug-Free Communities Support Program.
- Executive Office for Weed and Seed⁹
There are three areas in New Orleans that have received official recognition and Federal funding as Weed and Seed sites.
- FY 2001 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Discretionary Funds received in New Orleans:¹⁰
 - New Orleans was awarded \$249,000 for the New Orleans Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS Minority Health Collaborative. Project period: 9/30/1999-9/29/2002.

- The city of New Orleans received \$500,000 to expand residential treatment. Project period: 9/30/2001-9/29/2004.
 - The Orleans Parish District Attorney was awarded \$500,000 to increase treatment services for adolescents. The project period is 9/30/2000-9/29/2003.
 - CADA received \$272,961 to conduct programs that promote the adoption of evidence-based practices. The project period is 9/30/2001-9/29/2004.
 - Odyssey House Louisiana, Inc. received \$487,746 to expand gender specific residential treatment services for HIV positive African American women. The project period is 9/30/2001-9/29/2006.
- FY 2001 Housing and Urban Development Drug Elimination Grant amounts received in New Orleans:¹¹
- \$125,000 to Gordon Plaza Senior Complex
- No New Orleans grantees received funding through the FY 2002 Office of Justice Programs Drug Court grant program.¹²

Crime and Drug-Related Crime

- From January to September 2002, there were 181 murders known to the New Orleans Police Department.¹³

Number of Index Offenses Known to Police, New Orleans, 1999-2002

Offense	Full Year 1999	Full Year 2000	Full Year 2001	January-Sept. 2002
Murder	159	203	212	181
Rape	280	225	209	130
Armed robbery	1,981	1,810	2,053	1,143
Simple robbery	752	611	636	384
Assault	2,760	2,304	2,677	1,701
Burglary	5,626	5,230	5,046	3,606
Theft	17,086	15,575	15,965	11,288
Auto theft	7,118	7,866	8,615	5,779
Total index offenses	35,762	33,824	36,276	24,212

- Data collected from New Orleans adult arrestees in 2001 indicate that 67.8% of adult male and 56.4% of adult female arrestees tested positive for an illegal drug at arrest.¹⁴

Percent of Adult Arrestees Testing Positive for Drugs, New Orleans, 2001

Drug Type	Males	Females
Cocaine	37.3%	38.1%
Opiates	15.6	7.6
Marijuana	44.9	25.1
Methamphetamine	0.0	0.0
PCP	0.0	0.3
Any of the above drugs	67.8	56.4
Multiple drugs	24.3	13.7

- Over fifty percent of adult male arrestees reported using marijuana in the past year. Among the male arrestees who reported past year use of marijuana, the average number of days the substance was used in the past month was 11.5 days.¹⁵

Past Drug Use, Adult Male Arrestees, New Orleans, 2001

Use	Crack Cocaine	Powder Cocaine	Marijuana	Meth-amphet.	Opiates
Past 7 days	16.5%	9.4%	43.4%	0.1%	12.7%
Past 30 days	17.5%	10.9%	47.1%	0.5%	13.3%
Past year	18.9%	12.3%	52.0%	0.7%	14.2%
Avg. # of days used in month	10.9	8.2	11.5	1.8	12.0

- Nearly 43% of adult female arrestees reported using marijuana in the past year.¹⁶

Past Drug Use, Adult Female Arrestees, New Orleans, 2001

Use	Crack Cocaine	Powder Cocaine	Marijuana	Meth-amphet.	Opiates
Past 7 days	26.1%	4.7%	10.5%	0.0%	6.1%
Past 30 days	28.0%	5.7%	34.8%	1.0%	7.0%
Past year	30.5%	8.3%	42.6%	1.0%	8.3%
Avg. # of days used in month	9.5	9.8	9.4	1.1	14.1

- According to New Orleans homicide detectives, the number of murders believed to be motivated by illegal drugs, most notably crack cocaine and heroin, increased from 19 percent in 1998 to 37 percent in 2001.¹⁷
- During the first half of 2001, there were 1,001 arrests for drug paraphernalia in Orleans Parish.¹⁸

Number of Drug Arrests, Orleans Parish, First Halves 2000-2001

	Males		Females		Total	
	2000	2001	2000	2001	2000	2001
Cocaine – possession	649	584	109	109	758	693
Cocaine – distribution	358	318	149	105	507	423
Heroin – possession	157	133	14	16	171	149
Heroin – distribution	94	59	6	10	100	69
Marijuana – possession	2474	2342	310	253	2,784	2,595
Marijuana – distribution	346	407	93	42	439	449
Scheduled drugs* – possess.	665	623	153	170	818	793
Scheduled drugs* – distrib.	413	325	43	53	456	378
Other drugs	121	137	20	103	141	240
Drug paraphernalia	879	792	224	209	1,103	1,001

* “Scheduled drugs” are Schedule I, II, and IV Narcotics.

- Raves seem to have disappeared in the New Orleans area since the New Orleans State Palace Theater was shut down in 2000 as a result of Operation Rave Review (see the

Enforcement section for more information about this initiative). The theater's owner was tried, heavily fined, and was not allowed to reopen the facility.¹⁹

Drugs

➤ Cocaine/Crack

Pulse Check sources consider crack to be the most widely used illicit drug in New Orleans. From Spring 2001 to Fall 2001, the availability of powder cocaine remained stable in New Orleans.²⁰ Powder cocaine prices in New Orleans averaged \$80-\$150 per gram, \$800-\$1,200 per ounce, and \$18,000-\$25,000 per kilogram.²¹ A gram of crack cocaine costs between \$40 and \$50 in New Orleans.²²

➤ Heroin

The use of heroin appears to be making a comeback in New Orleans, especially with young people. This may be due to the arrival of a powdery form of heroin that can be snorted or smoked instead of injected. Heroin has become an easily obtainable substitute to OxyContin.²³ Despite the increase in heroin snorting, injection remains the predominant route of administration. Some younger users are lacing marijuana cigarettes with heroin.²⁴ Colombian, Southeast Asian, and Mexican heroin are widely available in the New Orleans area. Street sources indicate that while black tar heroin is available, it is rarely used. In the first half of 2001, heroin prices averaged \$450-\$750 per gram, \$5,000-\$10,000 per ounce, and \$140,000-\$175,000 per kilogram.²⁵ Purity levels for South American heroin found in New Orleans have reached 45%.²⁶

➤ Marijuana

Marijuana continues to be the drug of choice among young people in New Orleans.²⁷ Locally produced commercial grade marijuana is the most common variety found in New Orleans, followed by Mexican commercial grade marijuana. Marijuana is predominantly smoked in joints, but blunts are occasionally reported, mostly among people visiting the city.²⁸ Between the first halves of 2000 and 2001, marijuana prices remained stable, averaging \$100 per gram, \$125-\$168 per ounce, \$750-\$1,000 per pound, and \$2,000 per kilogram.²⁹

➤ Methamphetamine

While most indicators are low, law enforcement agencies report that methamphetamine use among college-age men and women remains a problem in New Orleans.³⁰ According to *Pulse Check* treatment sources, the number of novice methamphetamine users (those who have used methamphetamine for less than one year before entering treatment) has increased in New Orleans. A gram of methamphetamine typically costs \$100 in New Orleans.³¹

➤ Club Drugs

The average price of an MDMA tablet in New Orleans was \$15.25 in 2001. GHB and GBL prices were \$5.00 per capsule or \$10 per ounce.³²

➤ Other Drugs

The abuse of OxyContin is an emerging problem in New Orleans. Pills usually cost \$100 per 40 milligrams. The most frequently mentioned OxyContin diversion method in New Orleans is forging prescriptions. Some patients also fill legal and legitimate prescriptions and sell some of the pills. OxyContin injection remains a popular form of administration in New Orleans.³³

Juveniles

- Among New Orleans high school students surveyed in 2001, approximately thirty percent reported marijuana use at least once during their lifetime.³⁴

Percent of High School Students Reporting Selected Drug Use, New Orleans, 2001

	Female	Male	Total
Lifetime marijuana use	27.5%	32.0%	29.7%
Current marijuana use	14.9	18.8	16.8
Lifetime cocaine use	2.0	4.0	3.2
Current cocaine use	1.3	2.7	2.3
Lifetime inhalant use	7.1	6.2	7.0
Current inhalant use	3.0	3.1	3.3
Lifetime heroin use	1.6	4.3	3.1
Lifetime methamphetamine use	1.9	4.6	3.3
Lifetime illegal steroid use	2.5	6.4	4.5
Lifetime injecting illegal drug use	1.3	4.4	2.9

- Nearly fifty percent of 11th grade students reported lifetime marijuana use.³⁵

Percent of High School Students Using Selected Drugs, by Grade, New Orleans, 2001

	9th	10th	11th
Lifetime marijuana use	24.6%	31.0%	49.0%
Past month marijuana use	13.6	16.8	30.7
Lifetime cocaine use	2.7	3.1	4.0
Past month cocaine use	1.7	2.2	2.9
Lifetime inhalant use	6.5	6.0	6.7
Past month inhalant use	2.5	1.9	5.8
Lifetime heroin use	2.4	2.4	3.8
Lifetime methamphetamine use	2.0	3.6	3.8
Lifetime steroid use	4.0	3.6	4.8
Lifetime injection of illegal drug	2.6	1.2	5.7

- Nearly ten percent of Orleans Parish seniors surveyed in 2001 reported being current users of inhalants.³⁶

Students Reporting Past Month Drug Use, Orleans Parish, 1998 and 2001

	Grade 6		Grade 8		Grade 10		Grade 12	
	1998	2001	1998	2001	1998	2001	1998	2001
Alcohol	6.7%	13.3%	20.4%	22.5%	31.1%	53.2%	43.2%	87.8%
Cigarettes	2.7	4.7	9.9	12.0	15.6	22.1	17.3	31.7
Marijuana	0.9	2.1	5.5	8.5	11.5	0.0	13.8	4.9
Inhalants	3.0	5.0	4.8	7.7	3.5	0.0	2.4	9.8
Hallucinogens	0.2	4.3	0.7	5.2	1.5	0.0	1.4	0.0
Cocaine	0.4	1.4	0.5	4.3	0.6	0.0	1.0	2.4
Stimulants	0.3	1.5	0.7	3.8	1.3	0.0	1.4	0.0

- More than seven percent of Orleans Parish 6th grade students surveyed in 2001 reported lifetime use of inhalants.³⁷

Students Reporting Lifetime Drug Use, Orleans Parish, 1998 and 2001

	<u>Grade 6</u>		<u>Grade 8</u>		<u>Grade 10</u>		<u>Grade 12</u>	
	1998	2001	1998	2001	1998	2001	1998	2001
Students surveyed	3,687	209	3,058	412	2,573	77	1,906	41
Alcohol	19.4%	21.8%	43.9%	42.9%	61.4%	81.6%	72.2%	92.7%
Cigarettes	12.8	18.8	36.8	32.9	46.8	33.8	48.9	68.3
Marijuana	2.0	3.6	12.2	15.7	27.4	5.2	35.6	31.7
Inhalants	6.0	7.1	10.7	11.3	10.2	3.9	7.3	17.1
Hallucinogens	0.4	3.6	1.3	5.8	2.9	1.3	4.5	14.6
Cocaine	0.8	2.1	1.2	5.9	1.8	0.0	3.1	5.0
Stimulants	0.7	2.2	1.2	5.7	1.9	1.3	3.3	10.3

Enforcement

- Gulf Coast HIDTA Initiatives found in New Orleans:³⁸
 - New Orleans Gang Task Force: Members of this task force target violent criminal groups involved in drug trafficking in New Orleans.
 - Greater New Orleans Organized Crime Task Force: Targets Asian gangs involved in drug distribution and related violent crime in the New Orleans area.
- Operation Rave Review³⁹

As a result of an overdose death of a seventeen-year old female at a rave in 1998, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) assessed the extent of rave activity in the New Orleans area. The assessment indicated a correlation between rave activity and club drug overdoses. Following the assessment, the DEA, New Orleans Police Department, and U.S. Attorney's Office developed a methodology for the prosecution of rave promoters who allow open, unabated drug use at rave events. Operation Rave Review resulted in the arrests of several rave promoters and the closing of the largest rave operation in New Orleans.
- As of October 31, 2001, there were 2,010 full time law enforcement employees in New Orleans.⁴⁰

Trafficking and Seizures

- The Gulf Coast HIDTA's geographic location between the southwest border and the eastern seaboard serves as a strategic corridor for traffickers transporting drugs and money to and from the eastern and northern parts of the country.⁴¹
- The area's waterways, deepwater ports, railway and highway systems, and airports are used extensively by drug trafficking and smuggling operations.⁴²
- The Port of New Orleans is a transportation hub and distribution center for licit and illicit commodities. It is also a popular embarkation point and destination for the Caribbean cruise ship circuit, providing an opportunity for American and foreign passengers to smuggle drugs.⁴³
- Drug trafficking organizations use commercial and charter flights at the New Orleans International Airport to smuggle cocaine and heroin from Central America and

Mexico. The New Orleans International Airport is the only airport in the Gulf Coast region that receives international flights from Central America.⁴⁴

- New Orleans has become a regional heroin distribution center.⁴⁵
- Most of the methamphetamine available in New Orleans originates in Mexico and California and is transported through Texas.⁴⁶

Courts

- Drug Courts⁴⁷

As of January 17, 2002, there was one drug court that has been operating for over two years, one drug court that was recently implemented, and no drug courts being planned in New Orleans.

Corrections

- On July 1, 2002, approximately 11% (11.4%) of the adults on probation in Louisiana were from Orleans Parish. 8.8% of those on parole and 14.0% of those on good-time parole supervision were also from Orleans Parish.⁴⁸
- 19.3% of the adults in Louisiana correctional facilities on July 1, 2002 were from Orleans Parish. 28.1% of youthful offenders in the state correctional system were from Orleans Parish. The youthful offender population is made up of inmates who were 14, 15, or 16 at the time of admission and who were convicted in criminal court and sentenced to the custody of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections.⁴⁹

Consequences of Use

- During 2001, there were 1,422 emergency department (ED) cocaine mentions in New Orleans.⁵⁰

Number of ED Drug Mentions, Selected Drugs, New Orleans, 1998-2001

Drug Type	1998	1999	2000	2001
Alcohol-in-combination	1,919	1,916	1,948	1,181
Cocaine	2,395	2,139	1,998	1,422
Heroin	510	649	982	530
Marijuana	1,196	1,044	1,068	814
Amphetamines	55	41	103	118
Methamphetamine	25	23	27	--
MDMA (Ecstasy)	42	51	44	34
Ketamine	5	9	4	2
LSD	77	76	35	18
PCP	9	16	16	8
Miscellaneous hallucinogens	4	--	5	4
GHB	35	78	69	72
Inhalants	8	--	0	0
Total ED drug abuse episodes	5,088	4,459	4,664	3,729
Total ED drug mentions	9,649	8,907	9,172	7,037

- In the first half of 2001, the Orleans Parish Coroner's Office reported 112 homicides. 75% of the homicides were drug-related.⁵¹

Number of Homicides and Suicides, Orleans Parish, First Halves 2000-2001

	Homicides		Suicides	
	2000	2001	2000	2001
Total	120	112	26	42
Percent drug-related	83%	75%	31%	50%

- During 2000, New Orleans medical examiners (ME) reported 103 drug abuse deaths. Cocaine was mentioned in 60 of the deaths.⁵²

Number of Drug Mentions Reported by ME, New Orleans, 1996-2000

Drug Type	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Alcohol-in-combination	30	19	25	41	44
Cocaine	38	36	36	50	60
Heroin/morphine	15	16	28	37	45
Marijuana	9	13	21	21	23
Club drugs	1	--	1	4	2
Hallucinogens	--	--	--	1	--
Narcotic analgesics	7	13	21	52	25
Other analgesics	6	8	7	3	6
Benzodiazepines	2	--	14	6	13
Antidepressants	2	4	2	12	7
All other substances	4	15	12	37	25
Total drug deaths	60	56	76	94	103
Total drug mentions	114	124	167	264	250

- Seventy-eight percent of the drug abuse deaths in 2000 involved more than one drug.⁵³
- Some heroin addicts are switching to OxyContin, which is purer, leading to several overdoses.⁵⁴

Treatment

- Among New Orleans adult arrestees interviewed in 2001, 5.6% of the male arrestees and 6.9% of the female arrestees reported receiving drug treatment in the previous year.⁵⁵
- In FY 2001, there were 1,114 admissions to treatment in Orleans Parish for cocaine.⁵⁶

Number of Admissions to Treatment, by Major Drug, Orleans Parish, FY 1998-2001

Major Drug	1998	1999	2000	2001
Cocaine	1,291	1,139	1,211	1,114
Heroin	344	173	453	362
Marijuana	1,210	1,021	1,089	947

Sources

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